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Monitoring gender equality and social inclusion in forest and landscape restoration programmes

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Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

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> *Gender equality is a basic human right and should be a goal unto itself, but it is furthermore critical for achieving other socioeconomic and environmental restoration outcomes.*
>
> Dick Frederiksen *et al.*, 2021, p.6

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1. Introduction

Global ambition to restore deforested and degraded lands has been increasing over the last decade as people have recognized the important role that healthy lands play in removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and mitigating climate change. This increase in global ambition can be seen in the Bonn Challenge, which increased its global restoration goal to 350 million hectares by 2030. **The following brief provides guidance for monitoring the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) strategy in forest and landscape restoration (FLR) projects and programmes, relevant for both national and subnational efforts.**

While considering the rights and priorities of women in FLR work is fundamental from a human rights perspective, research suggests that integrating GESI into FLR projects and programmes can also promote the efficiency and effectiveness of these efforts (Broeckhoven and Cliquet, 2105, Crossland and Paez-Valencia, 2020; de Siqueira *et al.*, 2021). Both men and women have diverse roles, priorities and needs in relation to the use of forest resources for the well-being of their households and communities. Taking a gender-responsive, socially inclusive approach ensures access to diverse knowledge bases and increases the likelihood that resources will be used sustainably and equitably (Broeckhoven and Cliquet, 2015). GESI integration tends to generate broader local buy-in and incentivize both women and men to contribute to restoration efforts, providing greater opportunities for enhanced well-being for women and men alike, as well as better chances for the long-term sustainability of restoration efforts (Sijapati Basnett *et al.*, 2017).

By contrast, there are risks in not involving women or recognizing their contributions. Gender-blind FLR initiatives have exacerbated gender inequalities by further restricting women's access to land and resources, undermining their voice and agency, and heightening their work burden (Sijapati Basnett *et al.*, 2017).

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2. Adopting good practice in forest and landscape restoration monitoring systems–a useful checklist

Here are some key questions to consider when integrating GESI into FLR monitoring systems, presented as a checklist.

Does the FLR programme articulate clear monitoring objectives that acknowledge the importance of GESI?

Ideally, the FLR programme's monitoring objectives should acknowledge the importance of GESI and articulate how the programme intends to address gender inequalities. These objectives may need to be further defined, possibly through additional research and analysis, to identify gender gaps. Participatory action research that involves women, young people, elderly people, and persons with disabilities to identify gaps, as well as analyse successes and challenges can bring a more nuanced understanding to the FLR programme, while also promoting reflection and co-learning opportunities. Some examples of monitoring objectives that incorporate GESI include:

- to understand how men, women, young people, elderly people and persons with disabilities contribute to and benefit from restoration interventions, and whether restoration efforts are improving their incomes and livelihoods;
- to measure progress for the gender-responsive goals identified in national, regional and international restoration strategies, and learn how to improve implementation; and
- to understand how ecosystem degradation adversely affects the livelihoods and well-being of men, women, young people, elderly people and persons with disabilities by reducing the availability of food, water, biodiversity and energy, as well as to understand the related priority needs for these groups.

Have specific objectives and targets for GESI within the FLR programme been set?

The objectives for GESI within the programme should be precise, and related targets should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART). Typically, GESI objectives would address key aspects related to gender equality, such as participation, benefit-sharing and empowerment. Some suggested examples of specific GESI-related objectives include:

- to increase access to restoration-related knowledge, as well as educational and training opportunities, for women, young people, elderly people and persons with disabilities;
- to increase FLR-related employment opportunities for women, young people, elderly people and persons with disabilities;
- to design monitoring restoration technologies that are relevant and accessible to women, young people, elderly people and persons with disabilities;
- to improve access to land rights for women, young people, elderly people and persons with disabilities;

- to improve access to microcredit and loans linked to FLR for women, young people, elderly people and persons with disabilities; and
- to increase the participation of women, young people, elderly people and persons with disabilities in decision-making related to FLR.

Have a clear governance structure and quality assessment/quality control (QA/QC) systems been put in place?

It is important to have a clear governance structure for the FLR programme and its monitoring component. The government's gender commission or agency, as well as gender-specialized members of civil society or academia could be part of the structure or advisory body (i.e. technical working group). Furthermore, the FLR monitoring system should incorporate the quality assessment/quality control (QA/QC) of data to ensure accuracy. The FLR programme may consider engaging its own gender expert to identify gaps related to GESI and to support implementation and monitoring.

Have qualitative and quantitative methods been combined?

It is advisable to combine both qualitative and quantitative methods in monitoring for scientific results that also convey nuance. Quantitative measurements of benefit (i.e. measurable improvements to income, number of women receiving training, etc.) should be complemented with qualitative information to support the interpretation of numbers and pathways which supported the observed changes. This data can provide a more nuanced understanding of the situation and help identify ways to improve the programme.

Have efforts been made to fully involve women in monitoring activities with an aim to build their capacity?

Special efforts to involve women in the monitoring activities at all levels should be made to ensure a more inclusive approach. It is necessary to understand social norms and address any barriers to participation for women and men. While women may be well-placed to monitor restoration work due to their common daily activities (e.g. small-scale agriculture, collection of woodfuel and non-timber forest products), the capacity for monitoring is often quite low. Therefore, efforts to integrate GESI should be simple and practical, focusing on capacity development under a phased approach to gradually establish a more robust system (See Box 1). When data is being collected, it may be necessary to separate female and male focus groups to encourage women to share their views more freely.

Are reporting burdens minimized, taking advantage of any synergies?

Wherever possible, the monitoring approach adopted should minimize the reporting burden by ensuring synergies between reporting on FLR efforts under various reporting commitments and the existing overall monitoring and evaluation (M&E) plan and matrices.

Is the monitoring system transparent in communicating its GESI results?

The monitoring system should ensure transparency and provide evidence of progress, achievements, and the impact in relation to specific objectives, including periodic assessments of who benefits from restoration interventions, as well as how they benefit.

Are GESI-related monitoring results being used to adapt management and improve implementation?

The monitoring system should be designed to objectively evaluate progress and provide guidance to adapt management. Data should be collected and tracked in a systematic and independent way to avoid bias, including gender bias. Results from monitoring may also be used to pinpoint investment opportunities for donors and other partners to provide resources and technical capacity to the programme. A robust system with accurate results will enhance trust and foster additional investments for scaling up. If designed appropriately, the monitoring system will also help to identify the specific needs of women and other marginalized groups in the context of FLR.

Are lessons learned for monitoring GESI being shared?

Experiences and lessons learned on monitoring GESI should be documented and shared with all relevant audiences in the appropriate formats, in the spirit of collective learning and to inspire replication. Monitoring results should be made publicly accessible to the extent possible, as well as shared and disseminated widely and strategically, including at the international, national and subnational.

Has the broader enabling environment been considered?

The broader enabling environment is central to safeguarding women's rights and interests in restoration efforts. Political support from the highest level is needed to bring about more equitable benefits for men, women and other marginalized groups. An FLR programme may be able to influence the enabling environment in transformative ways by advocating with policymakers, and effectively sharing experiences and lessons learned.

Box 1. Phased approach to monitoring

Tier 1 – responses representing estimates or broad generalizations with no or little supporting empirical data, presented with low confidence in their accuracy.

Tier 2 – responses that are more grounded in data, ground assessments or evaluations, but are still considered generalizations and are presented with a moderate level of confidence.

Tier 3 – responses grounded in data, ground measurements, peer-reviewed studies and evaluations, presented with a high level of confidence.

Source: Dave, R., Saint-Laurent, C., Murray, L., Antunes Daldegan, G., Brouwer, R., de Mattos Scaramuzza, C.A., Raes, L. et al. 2019. Second Bonn Challenge progress report: application of the Barometer in 2018. International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). https://doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.CH.2019.06.en

> *You cannot protect the environment unless you empower people, you inform them, and you help them understand that these resources are their own, that they must protect them.*
>
> Wangari Maathai, Environmentalist and winner of the Nobel Peace Prize (Maathai, 2011)

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3. Guidance to define and track gender equality and social inclusion indicators

Selecting the most appropriate indicators to track GESI in an FLR programme can be one of the most challenging tasks. A few general key points for indicator selection relevant to GESI include:

- **Select socioeconomic indicators that allow for the integrated, consistent, realistic and regular monitoring of the progress of the FLR programme**. As such, indicators should follow the general rule of being specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (SMART).
- **Consider the flip side of indicators**. For example, a high level of participation from women in FLR activities may appear positive, but it could also mean heavier work burdens for women who have many household duties (an issue that may be addressed by encouraging men to share household chores).
- **Identify indicators used in related monitoring frameworks or systems that can ensure comparability, consistency and reliability** (e.g. at the project, national, regional and global level). In this case, there can be an effort to identify indicators that will satisfy other reporting commitments, such as those under the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention), the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), etc.

Structuring of indicators

It is recommended to consider how indicators fit into a structure to complement and cover different aspects of GESI within the FLR programme. While there are several different conceptual models, it is recommended to use the Reach-Benefit-Empower-Transform (RBET) framework, developed by the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR),[1] since it is most compatible with monitoring GESI. Ideally, the monitoring system will include indicators that capture all four elements of this framework.

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[1] For more information, see https://gender.cgiar.org/tools-methods-manuals/reach-benefit-empower-transform-rbet-framework

The Reach-Benefit-Empower-Transform (RBET) framework

The framework can be subdivided into the following elements:

- Reach – indicators that identify how well interventions are accessible to men, women and other marginalized groups.
- Benefit – indicators that examine how men, women, young people, elderly people, and people with disabilities are benefiting from interventions.
- Empower – indicators that review the abilities of women and men to exert influence, foster agency and status, make decisions, and control FLR activities.
- Transform – indicators that track changes in disempowering cultural attitudes, power structures and norms (e.g. over women's land rights and ownership).

Sample indicators

Table 1 presents a list of sample indicators for consideration in FLR projects and programmes.

Table 1. Sample indicators for consideration in FLR projects and programmes

	Indicator	Link to RBET framework	Pros	Cons
1	**Number and percentage of women and men actively participating in FLR consultations, planning, workshops, committee meetings and training opportunities, further disaggregated by age, minority or social group.**	Reach	Straightforward and relatively easy to collect.	Does not capture information on the quality of participation.
2	**Number of women and men trained on land rights issues and redress mechanisms.**	Reach	Addresses an important issue and has potential to lead to reducing conflict and negative impacts on men and women.	Not directly linked to FLR. Quality of training is not measured. Only makes sense if redress mechanisms are functional.
3	**Number of FLR-linked associations (e.g. market cooperatives, producer associations, women's groups) created, and the inexistence and number of women and men participating.**	Reach Benefit	Provides insight into institutional support for men and women.	Could be challenging to define associations, especially informal ones or those with only minor FLR activities.
4	**Amount or percent of funding allocated to gender-focused FLR activities from various sources.**	Benefit	Expenditures reflect the importance of the topic and commitment.	May be difficult to verify with tendency to inflate.
5	**Number of women and men (or women's groups) benefiting from FLR-related: credit schemes; cash transfers; procurement opportunities; tools and resources; training workshops and study tours; and practices (e.g. agroforestry, intercropping).**	Benefit	Covers a key issue of restoration benefits to women and men in a concrete way.	Project-oriented indicator. Some topics may be at the household level, therefore difficult to distinguish women's benefits.
6	**Women and men who consider themselves better off as a result of FLR interventions or activities.**	Benefit	Indicates impact of FLR activities.	Requires in-depth household-level survey. Does not differentiate between different dimensions of livelihood (income, nutrition, etc.).
7	**Changes (increases or decreases) in women's labour burdens due to FLR interventions. Increase or decrease of women's time and effort to collect food and fuel.**	Benefit	Draws attention to an important aspect for women (time burden) that might otherwise be overlooked.	Detailed survey needed with competency in monitoring survey techniques.
8	**Women's and men's satisfaction regarding FLR training, FLR inputs and services, and access to markets for FLR products.**	Benefit	Feedback from men and women can be helpful for improving approaches.	Tends to happen at the project level; more challenging at the national level.
9	**Incidence of gender-based violence (GBV) related to resource rights and disposal.**	Benefit	Process of data collection can raise awareness on issues related to gender-based violence (GBV).	Not easy to get data. Ambient monitoring may be more feasible, though correlation lacking.

	Indicator	Link to RBET framework	Pros	Cons
10	**FLR-related jobs for women and men.**	Benefit	Strong synergies with international frameworks.	Consensus and understanding of the definition of jobs needed (length, payment, etc.).
11	**Number of women and men in FLR facilitation or training teams.**	Benefit Empower	Indicates women and men in positions of influence.	May be too oriented to a project-based approach.
12	**Rate of women vs men who speak up during FLR activities and influence agendas.**	Empower	Goes beyond participation to look at quality of participation and influence.	Requires more monitoring skills and time. "FLR activities" may need to be further specified. Guidelines for data collection would be required.
13	**Number of women and men in decision-making positions related to FLR activities.**	Empower	Indicates women and men in positions of influence and control.	If decision-making tends to be top-down, there may be a lack of data.
14	**Number of women and men as forest group representatives in regional and national leadership positions.**	Empower	Relatively easy to measure.	Not directly linked to restoration.
15	**Number of women and men accessing the FLR programme's grievance mechanism.**	Empower	Ensures attention to addressing women's specific concerns.	Limited in indicating if grievances were satisfactorily addressed.
16	**Secured tenure rights in FLR intervention areas measured in number of parcels or hectares, and disaggregated to identify right holders as women, men, or joint (married couples).**	Empower	Better tracking of tenure rights draws attention to the key importance of tenure and women's tenure rights with multiple potential benefits.	Complex issue in many contexts. Tenure security may not be clearly attributable to FLR interventions.
17	**Existence of legal frameworks that promote, enforce and monitor gender equality.**	Empower Transform	Draws attention to national frameworks which can have large-scale impacts.	Existence of frameworks does not equate to action on the ground.
18	**Share of women among owners or right holders of agricultural land, by type of tenure.**	Empower Transform	Better tracking of tenure rights draws attention to the key importance of tenure and women's tenure rights with multiple potential benefits.	The link to FLR interventions may not be precise enough.
19	**Women's and men's changed attitudes toward disempowering gender norms with relevance to FLR.**	Transform	Addresses deeper issues of changing attitudes and behaviours.	Requires in-depth surveys and competencies.
20	**Women's increased or decreased access to forest resources due to FLR interventions.**	Transform	Understanding and enhancing access is a first step to increasing benefits.	Potentially challenging to measure at some scales. More context specificity may be needed in order to collect data.
21	**Number of final agreements or recommendations on FLR proposed by women's groups and endorsed by either the local community or local authorities.**	Transform	Captures real change led by women or the lack thereof.	May be difficult to track if the decision-making process is protracted.
22	**Proportion of people who perceive their rights to land in FLR intervention areas as secure out of total adult population, disaggregated by sex (percentage).**	Transform	Better tracking of tenure rights draws attention to the key importance of tenure and women's tenure rights with multiple potential benefits.	Complex issue in many contexts. Perception may not equate to actual levels of tenure security. Improved perception of tenure security may not be clearly attributable to FLR interventions.

Source: Author's elaboration.

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